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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRETORIA 001760

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (REASON FOR CLASSIFICATION)

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [ASEC](#) [SF](#) [PGOV](#)

SUBJECT: THREE YEARS UNTIL PARTY CONGRESS, BUT ANC
SUCCESSION RACE ALREADY HEATING UP

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CLASSIFIED BY: CLASSIFIED BY POLITICAL APPOINTEE OFFICER
Madeline Seidenstricker for reasons 1.4 b and d.

Summary

¶1. (C) Barely five months into the Jacob Zuma administration, the race to replace him -- or retain him -- at the 2012 African National Congress (ANC) party congress is heating up. With so much time to go, and so much work to accomplish even before the 2011 municipal elections, it seems premature to be discussing succession so soon. Nevertheless, the race for the party leadership in 2012 is the subtext for a number of political actions and statements in recent months. Political infighting is only going to increase over the coming months and years. End Summary.

Succession Race Already on ANC's Mind

¶2. (C) The 2012 succession race for the top six positions in the ANC is already underway barely five months into the new administration's term. Zuma was elected to the ANC presidency in December 2007 and is scheduled to serve a five year term as party leader; he was named national leader when the party won the election in April. He has said he will serve only one term, but that has been called into question by a number of political leaders and allies who want to see him stay on. A number of recent statements and actions show that ANC members already are looking to 2012:

-- Congress of South African Trade Unions Secretary General Zwelinzima Vavi in early July said publicly that Zuma would serve two full terms as national leader and party leader. Zuma and the ANC failed to respond to Vavi's comments. ANC Secretary General Gwede Mantashe told reporters the ANC has procedures in place for choosing its leader, and those procedures would be followed in 2012.

-- Deputy Police Minister Fikile Mbalula, who is quietly seeking the position of ANC Secretary General, last week threw his weight behind Zuma for another term as national leader and party leader. Mbalula said, "We share the view that he (Zuma) should stand a second term as ANC president." Mbalula's comments came the same week that Free State premier Ace Magashule said that Zuma should stay on.

-- Newly appointed Housing Minister Tokyo Sexwale's decision to spend a night in a township showed one of the country's wealthiest businessmen wants to establish a track record of being a "common man" ahead of the party congress. Sexwale spent the night in Diepsloot on August 4 to begin a "conversation with regular South Africans about the conditions they face." Leading political commentator Jacob Dlamini told Poloff last week that Sexwale's decision to spend a night in Diepsloot was "all about posturing for 2012." He said, "Everyone knows that Sexwale wants to be ANC leader more than anything in the world. Let's not kid ourselves about why he spent the night in a township. He wants to get in touch with the ANC's grassroots supporters and show the country that he understands poverty as much as anyone so he can get elected." Dlamini added, "If Zuma fails to improve the living standards for regular South Africans, Sexwale can still point out that he addressed the issue early on."

-- Julius Malema's comments to the Mail and Guardian about Q-- Julius Malema's comments to the Mail and Guardian about race relations were a direct "warning shot" to ANC Treasurer Matthews Phosa about his plans to win the party leadership. Malema told reporters "the issue of race must be confronted." He criticized the Zuma government for appointing minorities to economic positions in the administration and blacks to security positions. He noted, "When people enter a debate, they should resist labeling others as African chauvinists or racists ... It means you are a fake ... There is a small group of elites in the alliance who present themselves as working class leaders, while there is very little to show that in everything they do. They spend most of their time drinking red wine." Dlamini told Poloff that Malema's remarks were aimed at Phosa, who is known to harbor leadership ambitions. He related, "Phosa helped drive a number of the economic appointments from his position as ANC Treasurer. He also is known to be extremely close to the Afrikaans community in the country -- some would say overly accommodating. Moreover, my ANC sources tell me Phosa likes

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nothing better than sipping red wine when he can." (Note: Phosa is a published Afrikaans poet and spoke out publicly about the need for South Africa to keep Afrikaners from emigrating. End Note.)

-- The imminent arrest of Sandi Majali for bribes paid in a KwaZulu Natal education contract is a way to undercut Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe's party leadership hopes. Majali was exposed earlier this decade for his questionable oil deals in Iraq and for funneling oil money to the ANC. Dlamini noted that Majali's arrest, which most likely would be followed by a lengthy court trial, would effectively "finish" Motlanthe as next in line for the presidency. He said, "This 'Oilgate' scandal is what would destroy Motlanthe. The ANC could make it go away, but it wants to compromise the Deputy President sooner rather than later." (Note: Majali traveled repeatedly to Iraq between 2000 and 2002 accompanied by ANC heavyweights such as Motlanthe to negotiate oil contracts to benefit the ANC. The contracts were under the UN's 'Oil-for-Food' program, allowing Iraq to receive proceeds for humanitarian purposes only. Two weeks ago, the Sunday Times published a leaked story -- many suspect members of the ANC leaked the story -- about the legal investigation into the connections between Majali and the ANC. End Note.) Dlamini said, "Watch this space. The possible arrest of Majali is going to hurt Motlanthe and others in the movement. That is why the story was leaked."

13. (C) Dlamini said the ANC's Youth League seems to be the early winner in the drive to dictate the succession debate. He noted, "There really are no other winners. Zuma will have

the power of incumbency, but look what good that did (former President Thabo) Mbeki." He noted, "What Zuma has in his favor is that there really is no one else who can unify the party and the alliance right now. He is it." According to Dlamini, the early loser in the succession debate appears to be the ANC Women's League. He said, "They are completely absent from the discussion. What is most interesting to me is that the odds of there being a woman leader in the next 10 years seem to be as remote as ever. They really have no one who can unify them." Overall, he judged it to be too early to say how statements and actions by ANC members will affect the succession race.

¶4. (C) What is clear, however, is that this discussion is not just a media, or public, creation. ANC National Chairperson Baleka Mbete last week spoke at a public lecture about the ANC's first 100 days in office. She said, "A lot is happening with regards to 2012. However, I want to emphasize that what is going on is about policy -- not about personality. Polokwane (the site of the 2007 ANC congress) was also about policy, not personality." (Note: Her remarks drew laughter from the audience because most political analysts agree the two years leading up the 2007 party congress were all about personality. End Note.) The fact that even she felt compelled to address the issue of succession underscores that the issue is real -- and not going away. She added, "We have to get rid of corrupt Qgoing away. She added, "We have to get rid of corrupt officials at the local level if we want to strengthen the ANC." Many read her remarks to say that the purge of officials with perceived loyalties to Mbeki or the previous administration will be selectively replaced.

Comment

¶5. (C) The fact that the succession race for 2012 is already heating up shows that the ANC is as interested in internal positioning as it is in running the country. As many commentators noted in the run-up the 2007 party congress, politics within the ANC colored every political decision (and non-decision) and often superseded effective governance. Talk of succession could distract efforts by the ANC to implement its domestic agenda unless senior leaders in the party quickly, and forcefully, stamp out the posturing of party officials. It would be a politically risky move for any of the senior leaders to make, but it may be a necessary one for the good of the country. End Comment.
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